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ABSTRACT

A two-phase study of external degree holders was carried out in 1976-1977 by the Bureau of Social Science Research in cooperation with the American Council on Education and under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education. Over 3,000 men and women who had received an Associate or Bachelor's degree since the commencement of these programs were surveyed via questionnaire regarding the usefulness of this degree for access to subsequent educational programs and to jobs for which a college degree constitutes a prerequisite or confers an advantage. Answers from 1,486 degree holders showed that the majority of graduates were white males employed full-time in relatively high-paying jobs at the time they completed the degree. More than half of all graduates sought to enroll for more advanced education following degree award, and practically all of them were admitted. The utility of the degree in the world of work was measured by means of four (self-reported) indicators: job change, promotion or pay raise, increase in job responsibility or security, and increase in status or respect from employers or co-workers. The degree yielded sizeable benefits, especially for women and for those in lower-level occupations prior to degree completion. Although education- and work-related outcomes had ranked high among the graduates' goals, the personal satisfaction of being a graduate was an important objective, especially for the older respondents. (Author/LBH)

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EXTERNAL DEGREES: HOW WELL DO THEY SERVE THEIR HOLDERS?

by

Laure M. Sharp and Carol P. Sosdian

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ABSTRACT

A two-phase study of external degree holders was carried out in 1976-77 by the Bureau of Social Science Research in cooperation with the American Council on Education and under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education. Over 3,000 men and women who had received an Associate or Bachelor's degree since the first of these programs awarded degrees (a few as early as 1960, but most since 1972) were asked to complete a questionnaire focussed on the utility of this degree for access to subsequent educational programs and to jobs for which a college degree constitues a prerequsite or confers and advantage. Answers from 1486 degree holders showed that the majority of graduates were white males employed full-time in relatively high-paying jobs at the time they completed the degree. More than half of all graduates sought to enroll for more advanced education following degree award, and practically all of them were admitted. The utility of the degree in the world of work was measured by means of five (self-reported) indicators: job change, promotion or pay raise, increase in job responsibility or security, and increase in status or respect from employers or coworkers. The degree yielded sizable benefits especially for women and for those in lower-level occupations prior to degree completion. Although education- and work-related outcomes had ranked high among the graduates' goals, the personal satisfaction of being a graduate was an important objective especially for the older respondents.

Introduction

Of the many educational innovations introduced during the past two decades in response to the needs of new educational clienteles and to the demand for educational alternatives on the part of some segments of the tradition student population, none has been more controversial than the so-called external degree programs. Although many of the opponents of these programs were not familiar with the structure of the programs or with the magnitude of enrollments, they quite correctly identified the fundamental difference between external degree programs and most other nontraditional programs: external degree programs tend to remove control over content and quality of programs from full-time faculties and traditional academic administrators. There are other differences, of course, but this is probably the most fundamental one. Conversely, the proponents of this form of nontraditional education saw it as the logical corollary of lifelong learning much of which takes place outside the classroom. Although they seldom went so far as to advocate its adoption for the majority of college students, they were persuaded of its unique appropriateness for the older student who had failed to undertake or complete college work in his youth, but had the desire and perhaps better qualifications to do so at maturity.

Other groups, including the Education and Work Division at the National Institute of Education which sponsored the research we are reporting on today, had different concerns which might be described as "consumer-protection" or "accountability" issues. Did the students who enrolled in these programs actually obtain a valid credential, acceptable

in places were educational credentials are important, namely in institutions of higher education and in many employment settings? Or are these inferior, second-rate degrees which will make it unlikely that their holders can gain access to reputable programs at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral or professional level (if they so desire) or that they will have access to jobs for which a college degree constitutes a prerequisite or confers an advantage?

As is so often the case in educational controversies, the issue was longer on rhetoric than on data. Just how significant was the external degree phenomenon in terms of the numbers of students and graduates? How many--and what kind of--institutions offer these programs? And perhaps most important, what makes a degree an external degree? Although research had been done on these programs, in particular by John Valley and later by Leland Medsker and his associates, most of the research concerns were centered on program typologies and program characteristics. Relatively little systematic research had been carried out about the students and graduates themselves. Why did they select these programs and how did they judge their usefulness? How good a credential was the external degree and did it provide the kind of pay-offs they had looked for when they enrolled? Our study was designed to provide systematic answers to some, if not all of these questions.

Let me clarify at the outset what are the obvious strengths and limitations of our approach. In order to define our study universe, we had to develop definitions and classifications which we will describe briefly in this paper and with which not everyone will agree. Our basic approach was to rely on graduates' self-reports about their goals and experiences, and while we feel that this is not only the most expedient way to obtain the types of data we sought, but also the most valid approach, it would

have been useful to supplement these data with information from gatekeepers in the world of higher education and work. We felt fortunate to be able to draw on the findings from Holly Zanville's study, which she made available to us early on in our research and which helped us to formulate our approach when we sought to develop measures of acceptability, i.e., access to further education.[1] With respect to the usefulness of external degrees in the world of work, we were not so fortunate. We found very little systematic and data-based information about employer's attitudes and behaviors with respect to assessment and evaluation of formal educational credentials, and the extent to which the nature of these credentials affect recruitment or promotion policies.[2] Funding limitations precluded a full-fledged study along these lines but we did conduct a small-scale survey to investigate in a very preliminary way how employers would view applicants or employees with "external" credentials. Time limitations preclude presentation of this separate research effort today, but the findings will be included in the final report of our study, which is being published by NIE this spring.

From what we have said, it is clear that there are a number of things which we have not studied. This includes the whole range of curriculum and instruction related data. A good case can be made for the importance of covering these issues in a study such as the one we conducted, since the quality of the educational experience, the extent to which the student is counseled, supervised and evaluated affect the amount of learning which takes place and no doubt the extent to which his post-degree experiences shape up.[3] Suffice it to say that we had the usual problem of

allocating limited resources and making trade-offs, and that this study is a first and necessarily rough attempt to obtain some answers to a narrow set of questions. Although in the end a research study can never limit itself to a pre-defined set of objectives, we have tried to focus on the credentialling value of the external degree, and we are calling our final report The External Degree as a Credential: Graduates' Experiences in Employment and Further Study.[4]

More troublesome to us was the absence of valid comparative outcome data. Although ours was a descriptive rather than an evaluative study it had evaluative implications for which we needed to have some comparative benchmarks. If X percent of external degree holders go on for graduate study, or obtain better jobs, is this better or worse than what might have happened if they had enrolled in a different kind of program? Especially for those who looked to our study primarily from the accountability perspective (and this included our sponsor), this was a crucial question: would these graduates have been better off if they had invested their effort and tuition money in a more traditional program? We struggled with this problem both conceptually and in practical terms, and did not reach a satisfactory solution. Conceptually, it is clear that for some students, there may be no educational alternative, and the external degree is the only game in town. Since the bulk of these degree holders are adults, comparisons with recent college graduates are open to obvious challenges.[5] Defining and locating a matched population of degree holders from traditional programs, such as evening or extension programs, presented enormous practical and financial difficulties and left an important methodological gap. We discovered that few institutions offer both external and part-time adult programs, and therefore institutional variance of unmeasurable magnitude would be introduced in a comparative study.

We made an attempt to work with a special data set from one institution which had some outcome data for both traditional and external degree students, but the numbers were too small and the demographic differences between the populations too large for systematic analysis.

In brief then, ours is not an evaluative study, but primarily a descriptive one. Frankly, since you will see that the data leave little doubt about the high degree of self-perceived usefulness (and the irrelevance of some of the early concerns which prompted this study), we do not feel that the lack of comparability is actually a very serious issue. We still favor a companion study which would develop comparable data for degree holders who had enrolled in traditional part-time or extension programs, so that adult students would have a full range of information from which to make judgments about the usefulness of various types of programs they might wish to consider.

How the Study Was Conducted

The data being presented here were collected through a two-phase study conducted by the BSSR in cooperation with the American Council on Education and with funding from the National Institute of Education. The study was restricted to associate and bachelor degree holders.

In Phase I, concepts and definitions of critical terms--external degrees, external degree programs, acceptability and negotiability--were developed. "Acceptability" was conceptualized as acceptance by educational institutions at the next-higher level (for example, access of holders of external BA degrees to graduate programs) and "negotiability" as the degree's usefulness in the world of work (for example, access to jobs, promotions, licenses). External degrees were defined as those awarded by programs which (1) emphasize minimal classroom coursework and have minimal

residence requirements, (2) generally allow considerable transfer credit for prior documentable learning through a variety of sources (e.g., work experience, life experience, coursework taken in other institutions or nonacademic settings) and (3) emphasize individually designed, self-directed study.

These definitions were further refined and specified in the course of Phase One. In particular, only programs in which less than 25 percent of the work required for degree completion had to be in the form of campus-based classroom instruction were considered eligible for the survey. With the help of existing guides and catalogues, we then proceeded to identify all such programs offered in the United States during 1976-77, contacted each of them, and asked them to supply some institutional and program information.[6] A total of 244 external degree programs located in 134 colleges and universities were identified and responded to our request for data. Between them, these 244 programs enrolled approximately 54,000 students in 1976, and had granted a total of 4,600 A.A. and 14,000 B.A. degrees since they were founded (a few as early as 1960, but most since 1972).[7] However, because our survey was to be limited to graduates who had had some labor market experience, we further restricted survey eligibility to programs which had graduated students in 1975 or earlier. The universe of eligible students was thereby reduced to 10,632.

We chose for inclusion in the survey a total of 32 programs from which we requested the names and most recent address of all graduates and anticipated receiving approximately 3,000 names for the survey. Programs were not selected on a random basis. Instead, the selection was a purposive one, designed to guarantee the inclusion of sufficient subsamples of graduates in various fields, at each of the two degree levels of interest (associate and bachelors), and in "affiliated" and "free-standing"

institutions. The former are those in institutions which offer traditional, classroom based programs; free-standing programs are those offered by institutions created specifically for the purpose of offering external degree programs. A total of 3,499 names of graduates were included in the mail-survey sample, with graduates roughly equally divided between associate and bachelor's degree holders. Of these, only 2,647 were survey-eligible (the others could not be located because of lack of valid addresses or were ineligible for the survey for various other reasons) and 1,486 subsequently returned usable questionnaires (56%). Comparisons between the characteristics of the originally chosen population and of respondents indicate that with respect to sex and field of study, the respondent population is very similar to the larger group originally selected for study.

Telephone follow-up of a sample of nonrespondents suggested that nonrespondents probably differ only slightly from those who returned a questionnaire. The only area in which there may have been dissimilarity was in job changes: nonrespondents may have experienced slightly lower levels of change. Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarize the programs and institutions selected for the survey of graduates, the number of names originally selcted and the number of eligible returns received, and present some data about respondents and nonrespondents.

Profile of External Degree Graduates

The typical external degree graduate in our survey was white (89%), was about 36 years old at the time of completing the external degree, was likely to be married (80%), had children (about 69% had at least one child), was employed (89%), was earning about $15,000 at the time of the survey, and was living in a household with a total income of about $21,600 (Table 4).

TABLE 1

INSTITUTIONS AND GRADUATES IN SURVEY

Institution	Level of External Degree Program	Number of Graduates in Final Sample for Questionnaire Mailouts	Institution Characteristics			
			Free-Standing	Affiliated	Public	Private
Baylor University Texas	Bachelor	12		✓		✓
California State University at Sacramento California	Bachelor	59		✓	✓	
Community College of Vermont Vermont	Associate	116	✓		✓	
Elizabethtown College Pennsylvania	Associate Bachelor	6 147		✓		✓
Empire State College New York	Associate	58	✓		✓	
Friends World College New York	Bachelor	124	✓			✓
Golden Gate University California	Associate Bachelor	102 332		✓		✓
Governors State University Illinois	Bachelor	116		✓	✓	
Metropolitan State University Minnesota	Bachelor	284	✓		✓	
New York State Regents EDP New York	Associate Bachelor	935 227	✓		✓	
Northwood Institute Michigan	Associate	17		✓		✓
Park College Missouri	Associate Bachelor	11 8		✓		✓
Pennsylvania State University Pennsylvania	Associate	93		✓	✓	
Southern Illinois University Carbondale Illinois	Bachelor	94		✓	✓	
Syracuse University New York	Bachelor	66		✓		✓
Thomas Edison New Jersey	Associate Bachelor	345 33	✓		✓	
University of Massachusetts Massachusetts	Bachelor	89		✓	✓	
University of South Carolina South Carolina	Associate	79		✓	✓	
Upper Iowa University Iowa	Bachelor	183		✓		✓
West Virginia State College West Virginia	Bachelor	53		✓	✓	
	Associate Bachelor	1,762 1,737	6	14	12	8

TABLE 2

COMPLETION RATES FOR MAIL SURVEY OF GRADUATES

	Associate	Bachelor	All
Number of names drawn into sample	1,762	1,737	3,499
Number of names removed from sample after attempts to obtain corrected addresses	602	228	830
Number of names removed from sample (deceased; duplicated cases; incorrectly included graduate level cases)	7	15	22
Adjusted Sample	1,153	1,494	2,647
Number of usable questionnaires returned by respondent	589	897	1,486
Completion rate: usable questionnaires in relation to to adjusted sample	51%	60%	56%

TABLE 3

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF NRQ FOLLOW UP[a] AND GRADUATE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	NRQ Follow-up		Graduate Survey	
	Completed Int. (B=150)	Original Sample (B=631)	Completed Questionnaires (B=1490)	Original Sample (B=3499)
Percent Associate.	53	64	40	50
Percent Bachelor	47	36	60	50
Percent men.	77	82	71	78
Percent women.	23	18	29	22
Percent white.	82		89	
Percent nonwhite	18		11	
Percent moving residence at least once since completing EDP	43			
Percent married	79		80	
Percent separated/div./wid.	11		9	
Percent never married.	10		11	
Percent no children.	22		31	
Percent one or two children.	41		39	
Percent three or more children	37		30	
Percent rating EDP more valuable than traditional degree program	41		38	
Percent rating EDP less valuable than traditional program.	8		8	
Median age at completing EDP	35		36	
Percent applied to further degree program. .	61		57	
Percent admitted (of those applying)	93		90	
Percent enrolled (of those admitted)	88		92	
Percent employed while in EDP.	89		91	
Percent employed at time of survey	87		89	
Median own income at time of survey	$14,500		$15,500	
Median household income at time of survey .	$19,500		$21,600	
Percent employed in professional, sub-professional, or technical area while in EDP	45		45	
Percent employed in clerical or sales, lower management while in EDP.	14		13	
Percent employed in military while in EDP. .	27		23	
Percent changed jobs as a result of the EDP (of those employed).	37		46	
Percent promoted as a result of the EDP (of those employed).	49		55	
Percent increased job responsilities as a result of the EDP.	50		59	

[a]NRQ follow-up: telephone interviews with 150 nonrespondents. 631 nonrespondents had been selected for this follow-up, but only 150 were successfully contacted.

[b]Rounded to the nearest $100.

These overall figures conceal some differences by degree level, or sex, or both. Differences along level of degree were seen in three key areas--in age upon completing the external degree program, in type of employment, and in income (for Associate graduates, the median age was 33, as compared to 37 for Bachelors; fewer Associates had professional, subprofessional, or technical jobs; both personal and household income were lower as reported by Associate graduates). Differences by sex with respect to marital status, employment status, and income were quite marked. For example, 18 percent of the women in the study reported being divorced, separated, or widowed, in comparison with only 6 percent of the men. Men were considerably more often employed: at the time of the survey, 94 percent of the reporting men had a job, compared with 77 percent of the women; and while enrolled in external degree studies, the respective figures were 97 percent and 78 percent. More women than men reported working in clerical, sales, or lower management positions at the time of the survey. Correspondingly, women reported lower personal income than did men, and the gap is a startling one ($9,900 as compared to $17,500). It should be stressed however, that the survey did not seek detailed data about salaries and income; it is quite possible that more women than men worked part-time schedules. Total family income is quite high for this population, suggesting that these programs serve as predominantly middle-class population, a point to which we plan to return later in this paper.

Although men and women did not differ in their choice of level of external degree (39 percent of reporting men and 40 percent of the women had earned an Associate degree), they did differ in their choice of area of study, along traditional sex-stereotypical lines. Women more often enrolled in appplied social sciences/human services or in humanities/fine arts programs; men appeared to prefer business or public administration.

TABLE 4

SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDING GRADUATES
(Percentage Responding)

	Men	Women	Associates	Bachelors	All
	(B=1031)[a]	(B=420)[a]	(B=589)	(B=897)	(B=1486)
Percent Associate	39	40			
Percent Bachelor	61	60			
(N responding)	(1031)	(420)			
Percent men			71	71	71
Percent women			29	29	29
(N responding)			(570)	(881)	(1451)
Percent white	89	89	88	90	89
Percent nonwhite	11	11	12	10	11
(N responding)	(1021)	(399)	(574)	(871)	(1445)
Percent married	85	65	79	80	80
Percent separated/div /wid.	6	18	8	10	9
Percent never married	9	17	13	10	11
(N responding)	(977)	(349)	(572)	(755)	(1327)
Percent no children	25	41	26	34	31
Percent one or two children	43	33	43	36	39
Percent three or more	32	26	31	30	30
(N responding)	(1031)	(420)	(587)	(896)	(1483)
Median age at completion of EDP	36	36	33	37	36
(N responding)	(1031)	(420)	(589)	(897)	(1486)
Percent with previous degree.	31 (1031)	19 (420)	15 (589)	35 (897)	27 (1486)
Percent with previous enrollment but not degree	[c]	[c]	77 (589)	87 (897)	82 (1486)
Percent employed while in EDP	97	78	91	91	91
(N responding)	(1018)	(411)	(576)	(883)	(1459)
Percent professional, subprofessional, technical	38	67	38	50	45
Percent armed forces	30	1	30	18	23
Percent clerical, sales, lower management	10	25	18	11	13
(N responding)	(973)	(411)	(516)	(799)	(1315)
Percent employed at time of survey	94	77	88	90	89
(N responding)	(1005)	(406)	(571)	(869)	(1440)
Percent professional, subprofessional, technical	47	73	43	60	54
Percent armed forces	21	1	21	13	16
Percent clerical, sales, lower management	12	17	18	10	13
(N responding)	(916)	(306)	(484)	(767)	(1251)
Median own income (job at time of survey)[b]	$17,500	$ 9,900	$13,700	$17,200	$15,500
(N responding)	(917)	(272)	(502)	(688)	(1190)
Median household income (at time of survey)[b]	$22,200	$19,400	$19,200	$23,800	$21,600
(N responding	(945)	(325)	(549)	(721)	(1270)

[a] Two percent of all respondents (N=35) did not record their sex. Base figures for "All" columns are hence without regard to sex of respondent.

[b] Rounded to the nearest $100.

[c] Data not available.

The programs clearly appeal to an older age group. While the median age at which our respondents completed their external degree was 36, twenty-three percent completed their degree while in their forties, and thirteen percent completed it at the age of 50 or over.

Finally, in assessing the post-degree experiences of external degree holders, it is important to be aware of their prior educational experiences and of the reasons which led them to choose external programs over more traditional ones. Our respondents were not newcomers to the fountain of education. Overall, 27 percent of them had completed a previous degree and, although this degree was most often an Associate degree, in some cases it was at the Bachelor's level. More frequently, EDP graduates had begun degree work, but not completed it; over half (56%) reported having enrolled in at least one bachelor-level program in the "traditional" mode at some time in their past, but had not completed their studies. Nearly one-fifth (19%) reported similar experience with a traditional Associate level program. Clearly these external degree graduates for the most part did not just "wake up" at a later-than-average time in life to the need or desire for a college degree; rather, they were using the external degree program to achieve closure to something they had sought in many cases at least once before. The most frequent reason given by the noncompleters for not having completed a degree previously was that marriage or family responsibilities had been too demanding (34%), followed by "not having been sure earlier what I really wanted," military service, and financial problems (checked by 27%, 26% and 24% respectively).

Clearly these graduates for the most part were not entering the world of postsecondary education for the first time, nor were they of a chronological age or stage in life in which they were free of major

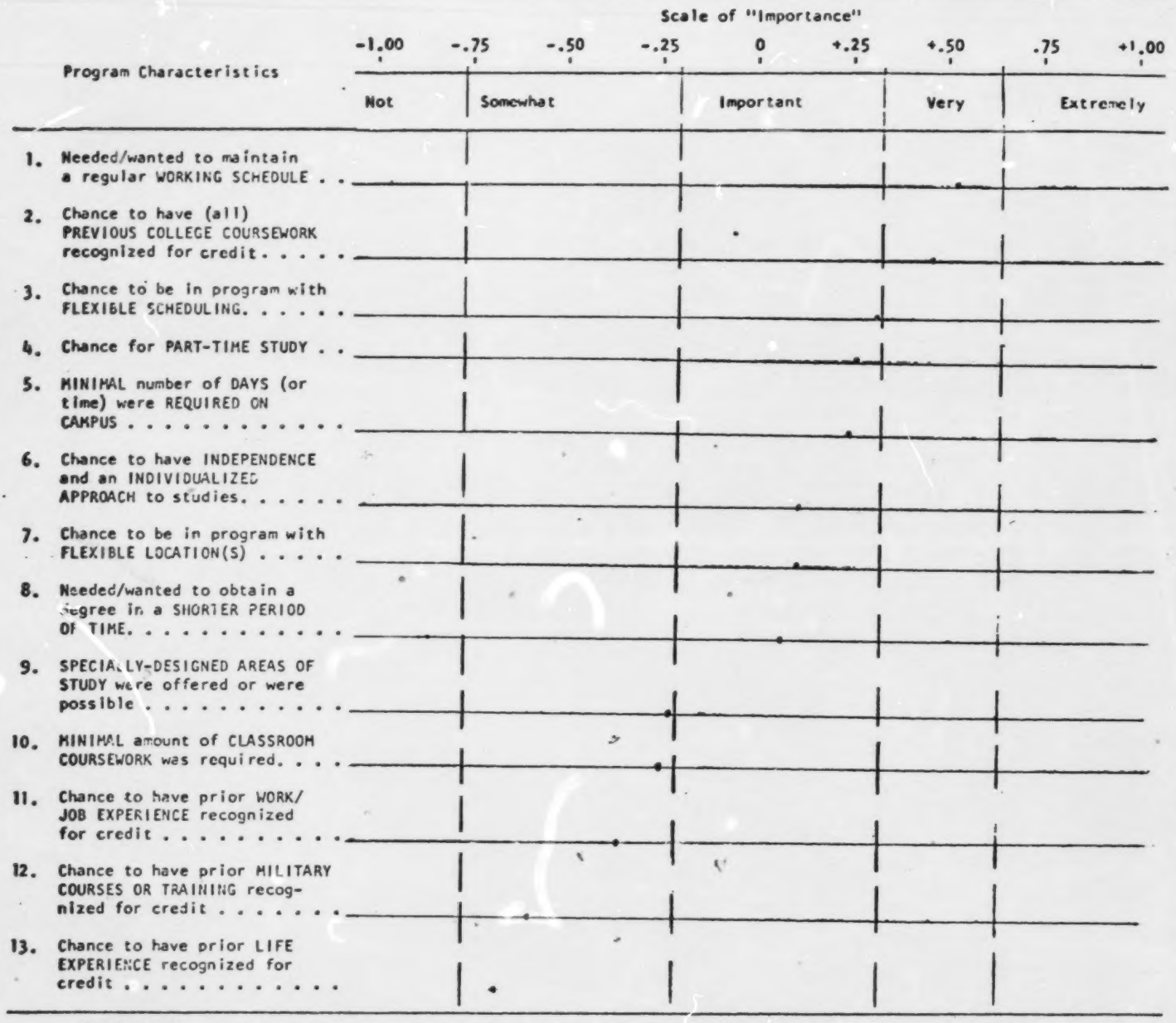
responsibilities to persons other than themselves. The effects of these practical restrictions were seen very clearly in graduates' ratings of the importance of program characteristics for selecting a degree program (Table 5). Overall, graduates considered two things very important: to be able to maintain a regular working schedule, and to have previous college coursework recognized and credited. Three other interrelated factors followed closely in importance in choosing a program: the desire for flexible scheduling, for part-time study, and for minimal time to be spent in campus-based attendance. Deemed of "medium" importance were the factors of "individualized, independent learning," flexible location, and being able to obtain the external degree in a shorter than average period of time.

Least important for choosing an external rather than a traditional degree program were the availability of specially designed areas of study, having a minimal amount of required coursework, and the opportunity to have prior work or job experience recognized for credit. Rated least important of all the factors were the chance to have prior military courses or training and the opportunity to have prior (general) life experience recognized for credit.

It is noteworthy that graduates differentiated between classroom-oriented coursework (which they apparently did not object to per se) and having to attend school at a campus (which they apprently wished to avoid, as this item was rated considerably more strongly). While graduates seemed to be aware of the opportunity to document one's prior work or life experience for the purpose of obtaining academic credit, this apparently was not an option weighing heavily for most of them. In sum, the attraction of external degree programs over traditional programs seemed to be that these programs would recognize all (or nearly all) previous college-obtained credits, and that it would not be

TABLE 5

IMPORTANCE OF SELECTED PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS FOR CHOOSING AN EXTERNAL RATHER THAN A TRADITIONAL DEGREE PROGRAM[a]


Scale of "Importance"
-1.00
-.75
-.50
-.25
0
+.25
+.50
.75
+1.00
Program Characteristics
Not
Somewhat
Important
Very
Extremely
1. Needed/wanted to maintain a regular WORKING SCHEDULE . .
2. Chance to have (all) PREVIOUS COLLEGE COURSEWORK recognized for credit . . . . .
3. Chance to be in program with FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING. . . . . .
4. Chance for PART-TIME STUDY . .
5. MINIMAL number of DAYS (or time) were REQUIRED ON CAMPUS . . . . . .
6. Chance to have INDEPENDENCE and an INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH to studies. . . . . .
7. Chance to be in program with FLEXIBLE LOCATION(S) . . . . .
8. Needed/wanted to obtain a degree in a SHORTER PERIOD OF TIME. . . . . .
9. SPECIALLY-DESIGNED AREAS OF STUDY were offered or were possible . . . . . .
10. MINIMAL amount of CLASSROOM COURSEWORK was required. . . .
11. Chance to have prior WORK/ JOB EXPERIENCE recognized for credit . . . . . .
12. Chance to have prior MILITARY COURSES OR TRAINING recognized for credit . . . . . .
13. Chance to have prior LIFE EXPERIENCE recognized for credit . . . . . .

[a]This scale was constructed using the Rasch Model (see Benjamin D. Wright, "Solving Measurement Problems with the Rasch Model," Journal of Educational Measurement, Vol. 14, No. 2. Summer 1977, pp. 97-116.

The number of respondents checking each item ranged from 1227 to 1422 (base N 1486).

The importance category boundaries are:

Not/Somewhat	-.77
Somewhat/Important	-.20
Important/Very	.32
Very/Extremely	.69

The actual item scale values shown above are:

Item #	Item Scale Value	Item #	Item Scale Value	Item #	Item Scale Value
1	.52	6	.12	10	-.22
2	.44	7	.12	11	-.35
3	.31	8	.08	12	-.60
4	.27	9	-.21	13	-.68
5	.24				

Standard error for all items $< .04$.

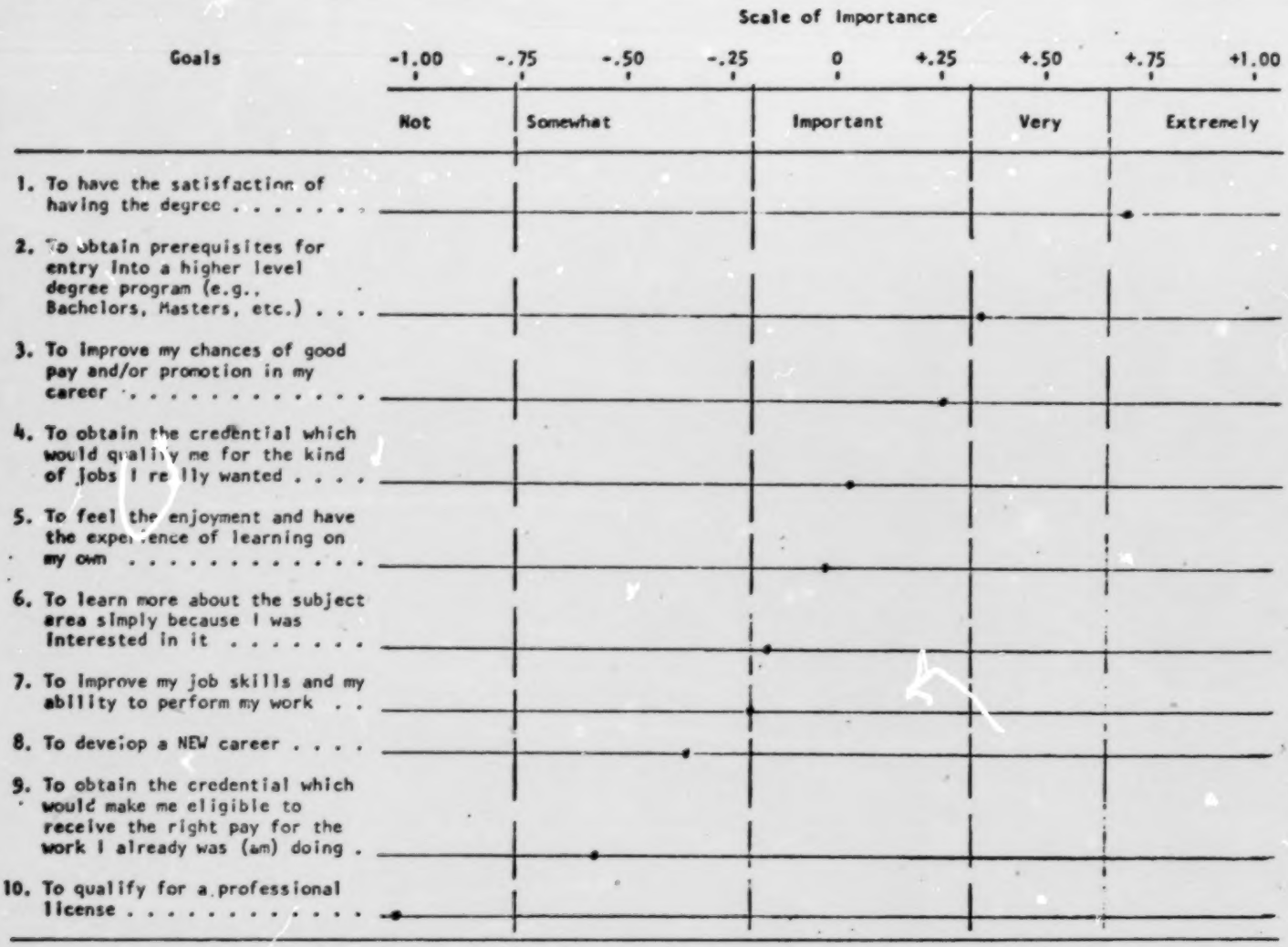
necessary to be present on a campus for any length of time. These two factors differentiate external degree programs from traditional ones. Most traditional programs recognize previous college credit, but there is usually a limit on the number and recency of credits that can be transferred. Furthermore, while traditional programs often have "extended study" classes available (for example, at night or on weekends), such classes still usually require travel to a campus, and time away from home or from other activities, which our respondents evidently wished to avoid. But these data also suggest that those aspects of external degree programs which are most controversial, in particular credit for life experience and minimal contact with the degree-granting institution, play a relatively minor role in attracting degree-seekers--or at least those degree-seekers who succeed in completing their studies and obtaining a degree.

Acceptability and Negotiability: How Important Are They to Students?

Before examining the extent to which external degrees provided their holders with a useful credential for further studies and for career-related opportunities, it seemed essential to determine the importance of these outcomes to the graduates themselves.[8] Previous research into motivations for postsecondary education among adults had identified three basic reasons: desire for general personal "rounding" or development, specific desire to complete a college degree, and career-oriented development.[9] In line with these findings, we specified ten goals for our respondents to rate in the following question: "How important to you were the following goals at the time you decided to obtain this degree?" (Table 6). Far and away the most important goal for these graduates was personal satisfaction--to have pursued and completed their college degree. Following in second and third place were having the external

TABLE 6

IMPORTANCE OF GOALS AT ENTERING THE EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAM[a]


Scale of Importance
Goals
-1.00
-.75
-.50
-.25
0
+.25
+.50
+.75
+1.00
Not
Somewhat
Important
Very
Extremely
1. To have the satisfaction of having the degree . . . . . .
2. To obtain prerequisites for entry into a higher level degree program (e.g., Bachelors, Masters, etc.) . . .
3. To improve my chances of good pay and/or promotion in my career . . . . . .
4. To obtain the credential which would qualify me for the kind of jobs I really wanted . . . .
5. To feel the enjoyment and have the experience of learning on my own . . . . . .
6. To learn more about the subject area simply because I was interested in it . . . . . .
7. To improve my job skills and my ability to perform my work . .
8. To develop a NEW career . . . .
9. To obtain the credential which would make me eligible to receive the right pay for the work I already was (am) doing .
10. To qualify for a professional license . . . . . .

[a]The number of respondents checking each item ranged from 1329-1428 (base N 1486).
The importance category boundaries are:

Not/Somewhat	-.77
Somewhat/Important	-.20
Important/Very	.32
Very/Extremely	.65

The actual item scale values shown above are:

Item #	Item Scale Value	Item #	Item Scale Value	Item #	Item Scale Value
1	.70	5	-.03	8	-.36
2	.35	6	-.16	9	-.56
3	.25	7	-.20	10	-1.10
4	.04				

Standard error for all items $< .04$.

degree as a prerequisite for further study and the degree's ability to serve towards career advancement (to improve the graduate's chances of obtaining better pay or promotion). Of lesser importance was a goal relating to career initiation (obtaining the external degree as a credential for job access). Two other negotiability related statements (improving one's job skills and ability to perform one's work, and developing a new career) were consistently deemed only of borderline importance. Finally, relatively few graduates sought their external degree as a tool towards formal recognition of the kind or level of work they were already doing, nor did many expect their EDP to qualify them for a professional license. The ranking of these goals differed slightly when age and sex groupings were examined separately, with women less interested than men in further education or in financial benefits, but more interested in obtaining access to the kinds of jobs they really wanted. The older the recipient, the more likely he or she was to report the satisfaction of having the college degree as being of high importance. Graduates in their peak developing years--about 25 to 45--consistently rated the career-oriented goals as more important than did those graduates who were either younger or older.

But it is also noteworthy that interest in the external degree as a prerequisite for further education dropped from the overall average by only five percentage points (for 59% to 54%) for graduates who had completed their degree at age 45 or over.

When we grouped the data more broadly--combining into one category all those respondents who mentioned any one of the career-related goals listed in Table 6, we found that 77 percent of all respondents felt that the achievement of a career-related goal was very or extremely important. Thus, of the two outcomes which our study sought to investigate --

career-related benefits and access to more advanced educational programs--the former ranked higher with these graduates, but the latter was a surprisingly close second, with 69 percent considering it a key objective.

When goal attainment was examined for each item separately, it was found that nearly all graduates who had considered personal satisfaction as a very or extremely important goal felt it had been reached (97%). Over three-quarters of the graduates felt that their external degree had provided access for higher-level degree programs. The outcome with respect to career-related goals was slightly different, although still very positive. Of the three career-related goals most commonly held by the respondents (better chances for good pay or promotion; obtaining the college degree as a career-initiating credential; and obtaining the degree to improve job skills and performance), the least specific of the three--general skill and performance improvement--was the goal most consistently considered satisfied (81% of those holding the goal considered it to have been reached). Those who entered the program with goals relating to career advancement or initiation did not reach them to the same extent (61% and 55%, respectively), but Bachelors recipients were more likely than Associates to have done so (66% and 61%, versus 52% and 46% respectively). For Associates, credentiallying goals (leading to licensing or pay adjustments) were not fulfilled for the majority of respondents.

It bears repeating that these were not always very salient goals. The picture of goal attainment sharpens when attainment is examined for those respondents who had considered particular goals as "very" or "extremely" important (Table 7). Regardless of the specific goal held, at least over half felt it had been satisfied; the median was about three-quarters, and percentages reporting goal satisfaction ranged as high as 97 percent. It is also worth noting that respondents found

TABLE 7

GOAL ATTAINMENT: PROPORTION OF EDP GRADUATES WHO HAD CONSIDERED A GOAL VERY OR EXTREMELY IMPORTANT WHO REPORTED REACHING THE GOAL

	Number and Percent Who Rated Goal "Very/Extremely Important"		Percentage of Those Who Rated Goal Very/Extremely Important and Who:		
	(N)	%	Reached Goal	Were Undecided	Did Not Reach Goal
To have the satisfaction of having the degree	1,432	69	97	2	1
To obtain prerequisites for entry into a higher level degree program (e.g., Bachelors, Masters, etc.)	1,425	59	87	6	7
To improve my chances of good pay and/or promotion in my career.	1,418	57	66	12	22
To obtain the credential which would qualify me for the kind of jobs I really wanted.	1,396	49	62	12	26
To feel the enjoyment and have the experience of learning on my own	1,381	43	97	2	1
To improve my job skills and my ability to perform my work	1,381	38	90	7	3
To learn more about the subject area simply because I was interested in it	1,380	36	94	4	2
To develop a NEW career	1,371	34	54	15	31
To obtain the credential which would make me eligible to receive the right pay for the work I already was (am) doing	1,366	27	68	11	21
To qualify for a professional license	1,326	13	66	6	28
(Base)	(1,486)				

it most difficult to decide whether or not they felt a goal had been reached when career concerns were involved. Percentages undecided were noticeably higher on these items. One other finding is relevant to this discussion: the great majority of respondents felt that not only in their own eyes, but also in the eyes of their spouses, friends, relatives, employers and co-workers, the external degree was at least as valuable as, or more valuable than, a traditional degree. Only in a few instances did more than 10 percent of the respondents feel that the external degree was less highly valued. Most often these were associate degree holders second-guessing the views of their friends, employers, and especially co-workers,

Younger graduates, especially those under 25, tended to value their degree most highly, and also expected the same higher evaluation from other persons in their lives. Graduates in the 35-44 age group, on the other hand, perhaps because they had done more reality-testing, were consistently less sanguine.

Acceptability: The External Degree as a Credential for Further Education

A very high proportion of those external degree holders for whom further education was a major goal actually implemented their study plans. At the time of the survey, 41 percent of Associate graduates had already completed a Bachelors or higher level degree, and 29 percent of the Bachelors EDP graduates had gone on to graduate study--a striking proportion. As shown in Table 8, almost none of the EDP graduates clearly intended to end their formal education with that particular external degree, and many had already gone a considerable distance towards more ambitious academic goals.

TABLE 8

HIGHEST ACADEMIC DEGREE COMPLETED AT THE TIME OF SURVEY
AND EXPECTED TO COMPLETE DURING LIFETIME

Highest Degree	Level of (EDP) Degree			
	Associate		Bachelor	
	Completed	Expected	Completed	Expected
Associate	59	1	-	-
Bachelor	36	29	71	6
Master's	4	41	27	44
Doctorate (Ph.D or Professional)	1	15	2	24
(Have not decided)	-	15	-	25
Total %	100	101[a]	100	99[a]
(N)	(577)	(547)	(742)	(682)
(B)	(589)		(897)	

[a]Does not total to 100 % due to rounding.

Since they obtained the degree, 57 percent of all respondents had taken at least the first step towards continuing their formal education beyond their external degree by applying for admission to another degree program. Ninety-three percent of these applicants were accepted by at least one of the programs to which they applied, 88 percent enrolled, and about 63 percent of the enrollees had completed the program by the time of our survey.

Not only had a sizeable proportion of the EDP graduates completed one post-EDP degree, but also quite a few went on to work for yet another. About one-quarter of the post-EDP degree completers applied for admission to a further program, and of these applicants, 97 percent were admitted, 87 percent enrolled, and about 30 percent had completed their second post-EDP degree by the time of the survey.

It is not possible to make direct comparisons between these data and available national statistics because the external degree study did not survey a single cohort. Our respondents graduated between 1969-75, with the majority of degrees awarded during 1974-75. However, certain comparative ballpark figures are of interest.

A survey of a national cross-section of college graduates (class of '74-'75) conducted in the Spring of 1976, showed that overall, 27% were enrolled in graduate study after completing their undergraduate degree. Proportions of men, women, graduates under 30, and graduates over 30 enrolled varied from the overall 27% figure only by two percentage points.[10] Consistent with this proportion, another study showed that "almost one-third (33%) of (college) students initially enrolled in 1968 planned to obtain a master's degree by 1976.[11] Of the entering class of 1969, five years later over one-fifth (22%) were enrolled in graduate or professional school.[12] Thus it is probably safe to say that

these external degree holders were as active and as successful with respect to further study as their counterparts in traditional programs, and probably more so if age is taken into account.

That over half of those who obtained an external degree continued to pursue formal education programs signalled that this degree was indeed operating as a "stepping stone" and did not constitute an obstacle to further education. The graduates whose interests led them to seek a more advanced degree gave a very positive overall evaluation of their external degree experience with respect to academic skills. Only one percent reported feeling that their performance in their next degree program was not on a par with that of students who had come from traditional programs, and over half (57%) felt it was better. Even with respect to specific areas of preparation, such as subject content or study skills, fewer than 10 percent of the EDP graduates saw themselves as less well prepared than their peers from traditional programs and close to half (44% and 48%) reported feeling better prepared.

We feel quite certain that these figures go a long way towards supporting the inference that the great majority of graduates from these external degree programs--regardless of their interest in further study--were satisfied with the academic credential they had acquired. This conclusion is reinforced by the reasons given by those external degree holders who chose not to go on for further study. Inadequacy of the external degree, or apprehension about its acceptability, were very seldom mentioned. Instead, the most frequently mentioned reason was lack of time to both work and go to school; this was fairly consistent for both Associate and Bachelors graduates. Also mentioned consistently by about a quarter of this group was their assessment that they did not need or really want a further degree at that time. Financial problems were noted

by 23 percent of the Associate graduates (only by 10% of the Bachelors), and being tired of being a student was checked by 10 percent of the Bachelors graduates (5% of the Associates).

The findings reported so far, although consistent with research done by the largest external degree program about the subsequent educational achievements of its graduates[13] leave, of course, many unanswered questions. For example, Zanville's study suggested that many nontraditional students experienced serious difficulties when seeking admission to some of the more prestigious graduate schools, and anecdotal evidence as well as official statements by the Council of Graduate Deans point in the same direction. One might therefore speculate that many of these external degree holders either re-enrolled in the institutions which had granted the external degree, or else were admitted by unselective institutions. With respect to the former, we found the percentage of applications to the graduate's alma mater to be quite high (34%). Of those who made only one application, 39 percent were seeking to continue their education in the same institution but among those making more than one application, the percentage was lower (16%).

With respect to selectivity, the findings are also reasonably clear. In general, applicants chose mid-range schools. With possible ratings ranging from a low of 1 to a high of 7, EDP graduates on the average applied to schools rated as "4," (mean rating = 4.2; median = 4).[14] Applicants from Associate programs applied to schools with somewhat lower ratings than did applicants from Bachelors programs (mean of 3.9 as opposed to mean of 4.4, although medians at 4 were equal). One of the applicants' strategies for assuring admission therefore may have been applying to a lower-rated institution when they applied to one school only, or to put that school first when they applied to more than one.

Extra applications typically were sent to institutions with slightly higher ratings; these may have been low-risk attempts to gain access to better programs. An alternative explanation for the selectivity choices of these applicants may simply be that lack of geographic mobility, financial resources, or any number of other restrictions may have come into play.

Only a minority of graduates (11%) reported that they experienced difficulties in gaining admission to higher level programs. Most often cited as reasons were the two characteristics of external degree programs which are most likely to be questioned in an academic context: lack of regional accreditation[15] and use of nontraditional transcripts. In order to explore this question more fully we subjected the data to further analysis, using a regression model, but because so few applicants had been refused admission, most of our findings were highly tentative and seldom reached statistical significance (Table 9).

Associates applicants were on the average about 5 percentage points more likely than average for all applicants to gain admission, and Bachelors about 4 percentage points less likely. Area of study in the external degree program seemed to be related to admission: graduates who had pursued Applied Social Sciences or General or Liberal studies degrees were noticeably more likely to be admitted than average. The type of institution from which the graduate had earned the external degree may have been of some importance in this admission process. Applicants who had come from "freestanding" institutions comparatively speaking were at a disadvantage by about 3 percentage points; those who had come from "affiliated" institutions were about 3 percentage points more likely than average to be admitted.

TABLE 9

REGRESSION ESTIMATES ON ACCEPTABILITY

MODEL	Stage II: Admitted?	
	R	.460
	(Base N)	(535)
	Mean Admitted:	.89
	(N)	Regr. Est.
SEX		
Men[b]	(433)	.00
Women	(102)	-.02
LEVEL OF DEGREE		
Associate	(220)	.05*
Bachelor[b]	(315)	-.04
AREA OF STUDY		
Business/Public Administration	(169)	-.01
Applied Social Sciences	(102)	.04*
General/Liberal Studies	(89)	.06*
All other areas[b]	(175)	-.04
TYPE OF EDP INSTITUTION		
Freestanding	(248)	-.03[d]
Affiliated	(287)	.03
APPLIED TO SAME INSTITUTION AS AWARDED EXT. DEGREE		
Yes	(196)	.03
No[b]	(339)	-.02
SELECTIVITY OF INSTITUTION		
Low	(14)	.03
Low/Medium	(93)	.04
Medium[b]	(65)	-.01
Medium/High	(80)	-.12*
High	(34)	-.08
Not Rated	(249)	.04
NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS APPLIED TO		
One	(427)	.03*
Two	(80)	-.10
Three or More[b]	(28)	-.25
AGE AT EDP COMPLETION		
Less than 30	(155)	-.01
30 - 39	(193)	-.00
40 - 44	(79)	-.03
45 - 49[b]	(54)	.04
50 and over	(54)	.04
GRADUATE'S GOALS AT ENTERING EDP:		
Desire for:[c]		
Job recognition/advancement		-.01[d]
Job mobility		.00
Improvement in job skills		.00
Enjoyment of learning		-.01[d]
Satisfaction of having degree		-.01
EDP as prerequisite		-.01
GRADUATE'S ASSESSMENT OF IMPROVEMENT IN ACADEMIC STUDY SKILLS[c]		.01*
GRADUATE'S ASSESSMENT OF SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM EMPLOYER[c]		.01

[a]Acceptability is defined as whether or not those who applied to further degree study were admitted.

[b]Significance not ascertainable for these categories.

[c]Continuous variable; questions were eligible to be answered by all respondents.

[d]Approached significance at $p \leq .05$.

*$p \leq .05$.

One factor which appeared to increase or lower the admission rate slightly was whether or not the graduate applied for re-admission to the same institution. When this was the case, the graduate's chances of admission rose about 3 percentage points, and if not, they dropped. These effects seem minimal compared with the wide variations which might have been expected, and again, it should be remembered that these relationships did not reach statistical significance.

The factor which did seem to explain admission better than other factors included in the survey was the selectivity of the institution to which the application had been made. The trend emerged for admission to be slightly more likely (three to four percentage points) if the institution was rated low or low/medium, to taper off towards avarage at ratings of medium, and to decrease sharply if the institution was rated medium/high or high. For institutions which had not yet been rated at the time the ratings source was developed (1971), the admission rate was similar to institutions at the low/medium portion of the scale.

The number of institutions to which the graduate applied was also related to admission. It appeared that graduates who had applied to only one institution were slightly more likely than average to gain admission. The model examined the outcome of one-and-only applications combined with applications which were first of a series of two or three. Inspection of the applications made by the few graduates who made multiple applications showed that on the average, they applied to institutions with slightly higher ratings.

Negotiability--The External Degree in the World of Work

As we have previously shown, when we combined career-related goals into a single category, as a set these goals ranked first among the

reasons cited by respondents for seeking the external degree. However, taken singly, they were evidently not met as consistently as some others; in particular pay increases and job change occurred somewhat less often than expected.

Since the "negotiability" of the external degree, or what might be thought of as its career- or occupation-oriented "market power," was a central concern of this study, we focussed much of our analysis on this topic, taking into account the respondents' actual experiences and a large number of potentially relevant variables, such as demographic characteristics, personal goals, type of occupation, type of employer, and employer interest in the graduate's academic endeavors.

While negotiability could have been measured in many ways, we chose to approach it by pinpointing specific kinds of changes in the graduates' work-life which might have resulted from completing the external degree program. The five indicators selected were: obtaining a different job; a promotion or increase in pay or benefits; an increase in job responsibilities; an increase in job security; and an increase in status or respect from the employer and/or coworkers.

A simple additive negotiability index based on the five job changes was constructed and used in the regression analysis which sought to find factors influencing negotiability overall. In addition, regression analyses estimating the effects of selected factors upon each of three specific job changes (pay increases or promotion responsibility increases, change to a different job) were also performed. Tables 10-13 present the most important data from our analyses.

Table 10 summarizes the actual occupational shifts which occurred between the time these respondents were degree enrolled and the time of the survey a number of years later. A modest shift in the direction of greater concentration in professional, subprofessional and technical

TABLE 10

JOB CHARACTERISTICS WHILE COMPLETING THE EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAM AND AT TIME OF SURVEY BY SEX
(Percentage Responding)

Job Characteristics	Sex					
	Men		Women		All	
	In EDP	At Time of Survey	In EDP	At Time of Survey	In EDP	At Time of Survey
Type of Employment						
Professional, subprofessional, technical	38	47	67	73	45	54
Armed Forces	30	21	1	1	23	16
Clerical[a]	5	5	22	14	9	7
Services[b]	11	10	3	3	9	8
Sales; Lower-level Management	5	7	3	3	4	6
Machine Trades, Processing, Operatives, Structural Work	6	6	-	3	4	5
Other[e]	1	1	-	1	1	1
Unable to code	4	4	4	2	4	3
Job With Predominantly Administrative Responsibilities						
In private sector	68	73	46	63	63	70
In public sector	36	44	30	52	35	45
Both sectors[f]	48	55	37	57	45	55
Total %	100	101[d]	100	100	99[d]	100
(N)	(973)	(916)	(316)	(306)	(1,289)	(1,222)
(B)	(1,018)	(1,005)	(411)	(406)	(1,429)	(1,411)

[a]Includes (but not limited to) financial related and data processing clerical.

[b]Includes (but not limited to) protective services such as police; health services; flight attendants. 72% of this category were protective services.

[c]Less than 1%.

[d]Does not total to 100% due to rounding.

[e]Nonspecified government work; agriculture related work.

[f]Level of administrative responsibility held in one's job was one of the few survey items with a notable nonresponse rate; hence, data must be interpreted cautiously.

Base N: Private: Men 146 - 177
Women 48 - 59
Public: Men 260 - 280
Women 65 - 67

occupation is apparent, but it is not a dramatic one, primarily because the majority of these degree-holders already held such jobs when they pursued their degree program. More detailed turnover analyses showed that 90 percent of those who held such jobs prior to degree completion were in the same category at the time of the survey, and similar high proportions of "holdovers" were found among those in service and sales occupations. Only among those who reported themselves in clerical occupations in the earlier period was there a sizable shift (46%) to other types of occupations, most often in the professional/technical category.

Given the very broad occupational categories on which this analysis had to be based, the addition of data on supervisory or administrative responsibilities was expected to provide a better handle for the assessment of advantages conferred by the completion of a college degree. Unfortunately, this item yielded a low response rate, and furthermore, the data suggested that persons who had administrative responsibility may have been more likely to respond than those who did not. Still, the shifts over time are of interest. Among those who responded, it appeared that graduates employed in the private sector were more typically in positions with administrative responsibilities than were those in the public sector (over all, about 30% more respondents from the private sector indicated these kinds of responsibilities). Some differentiation also appeared according to degree level, with Associate holders reporting these kinds of duties slightly less often. Sex generated the largest difference in the proportion employed in essentially administrative positions. Fewer women than men had administrative responsibilities while pursuing the external degree (37%, as compared with 48%), but 20 percent more reported

such responsibilities as of the time of the survey. Thus, after the degree was obtained, the proportion of men and women in jobs with administrative or supervisory characteristics was about the same (in fact, in the public sector, the proportion was higher for women) suggesting that degree completion led to very considerable payoff for women in this respect.

Another finding which we had not anticipated was the extent to which employers were aware and supportive of their employees' academic efforts. A very large majority (85%) of the graduates employed while enrolled in their external degree program reported that their employer was aware of their academic pursuits and only 16 percent of these aware employers failed to give some evidence of support. Although "moral support" was most frequently mentioned, close to one-third of the "aware" employers reportedly paid some or all of the study-related fees (30%). Only 11 percent of the respondents, however, had received a promise for better job prospects after completing the degree.

The extent to which graduates held "negotiability" expectations, and the extent to which these expectations were met, is shown in Table 11. As this table shows, there was a good deal of overlap betwen those graduates who expected changes and those who actually experienced them, but the match was not a perfect one. About 58 percent expected a promotion or pay increase: for two-thirds of them these expecations were fulfilled, but for one-third they were not. On the other hand quite a few of those who did not hold this expectation actually experienced financial benefits. Another tangible benefit, a change to a different job, was less often anticipated (43%) and happened with roughly the same degree of frequency, although again, not to all those who expected it.

In a regression model which examined the negotiability experiences of all previously employed graduates, demographic characteristics,

TABLE 11

JOB-RELATED CHANGES OCCURRING BY GRADUATE'S EXPECTATIONS
(Percentage Responding)

Occurance of Change and Graduate's Expectations	Job-Related Change				
	An Increase in Status or Respect from Employer and/or Coworkers	An Increase in Job Responsibilities	A Promotion or Increase in Pay or Benefits	An Increase in Job Security	A Change to A Different Job
Did not Expect					
I. And did not happen. . .	22	34	32	45	44
II. Bud did happen.	11	11	11	7	13
Did Expect					
III. But did not happen. . .	6	7	14	9	10
IV. And did happen.	61	48	44	39	33
Total %	100	100	101[a]	100	100
(N Responding)	(1,111)	(1,055)	(1,081)	(1,019)	(1,060)
(B)	(1,331)	(1,331)	(1,331)	(1,331)	(1,331)

[a]Does not total to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 12

REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF INFLUENCES ON OVERALL NEGOTIABILITY[a] FOR FIVE ANALYSIS GROUPS

	I All Employed While in EDP		II Women Employed While in EDP		III Men Employed While in EDP		IV Associates Employed While in EDP		V Bachelors Employed While in EDP	
R	.383		.462		.425		.466		.350	
(Base N):	(1112)		(254)		(832)		(440)		(669)	
Mean Job Change Score(se)	2.12 (1.84)		2.26 (1.96)		2.09 (1.79)		1.80 (1.81)		2.34 (1.82)	
	(N)	Regr. Est.	(N)	Regr. Est.	(N)	Regr. Est.	(N)	Regr. Est.	(N)	Regr. Est.
SEX										
Men[d]	(832)	.01					(344)	-.10	(511)	.04
Women	(254)	-.02					(96)	.36*	(158)	-.12
LEVEL OF DEGREE										
Associate	(440)	-.21*	(96)	.17	(330)	-.37*				
Bachelors[d]	(669)	.14	(158)	-.10	(502)	.24				
AGE AT EDP COMPLETION										
Less than 30 years	(335)	.12	(80)	-.05	(233)	.15	(153)	.13	(179)	.12
30 - 39 years	(375)	.23	(63)	.72	(310)	.17*	(150)	.16	(225)	.28
40 - 44 years	(144)	-.28	(29)	-.59	(115)	-.20	(48)	-.16	(96)	-.33
45 - 49 years[d]	(125)	-.07	(34)	-.10	(90)	-.16	(38)	-.07	(87)	-.08
50 or over	(133)	-.57*	(48)	-.42	(84)	-.62*	(51)	-.64	(82)	-.55*
AREA OF STUDY										
Business/Public Administration	(334)	.07	(35)	.13	(291)	.09	(90)	-.06	(241)	.14*
Applied Social Science	(224)	.14	(75)	.18	(145)	.01	(48)	-.05	(176)	.15*
General/Liberal Studies	(196)	-.17	(38)	-.68	(152)	-.05	(138)	-.03	(58)	-.45
All other areas[d]	(358)	-.06	(106)	.08	(244)	-.08	(164)	.08	(194)	-.18
TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT ORGANIZATION										
Private manufacturing[d]	(96)	.07	(11)	.04	(82)	.23	(43)	.18	(53)	.01
Education	(138)	.00	(84)	-.20	(47)	.39	(50)	-.17	(88)	.14
Nonprofit service	(152)	-.36*	(38)	.16	(111)	-.61*	(54)	-.57*	(98)	-.18
Medical, Legal, Financial	(66)	.03	(35)	-.55	(30)	.41	(25)	.61	(41)	-.21
Armed Forces	(262)	-.30	(18)	-.40	(254)	.14	(128)	.02	(132)	-.31
Self employed	(31)	-.07	(7)	-1.45	(24)	.38	(16)	.43	(15)	-.50
Government	(56)	-.04	(4)	.13	(52)	.02	(24)	.25	(32)	-.15
Other nonmanufacturing	(235)	-.17	(46)	.19	(184)	-.12	(90)	-.01	(144)	-.20
Did not specify	(76)	.14	(26)	-1.10	(48)	-.16	(10)	.16	(66)	.23
TYPE OF JOB										
Prof'l/Subprof'l/Technical	(493)	.07	(164)	.04	(350)	-.08	(168)	-.22	(324)	.20*
Clerical, Sales, Lower Management	(145)	.40*	(63)	.19	(79)	.08	(70)	.28	(75)	.26*
Services[b]	(101)	-.12	(8)	-1.06	(90)	.14	(34)	-.01	(67)	-.24
Armed forces[d]	(315)	-.27	(18)	-.67	(257)	.05	(145)	.10	(168)	-.40
Other	(58)	.03	(1)	1.56	(56)	-.05	(23)	.16	(35)	-.07
TYPE OF EDP INSTITUTION										
Freestanding	(524)	.03	(139)	-.22	(372)	.13	(304)	.05	(220)	-.09
Affiliated[d]	(588)	-.03	(115)	.26	(460)	-.11	(136)	-.11	(449)	.04
GRADUATE'S GOALS AT ENTERING EDP (INDICES):										
Desire for:[c]										
Job recognition/advancement		.11*		.11*		.12*		.18*		.07*
Job mobility		.00		-.06		.01		.00		.00
Improvement in job skills		.10*		-.02		.14*		.14*		.08
Enjoyment of learning		.03		.06		.03		.03		.03
Satisfaction of having degree		-.02		-.09		.00		-.05		-.01
EDP as prerequisite		-.03		-.04		.00		.09		-.11
GRADUATE'S ASSESSMENT OF OWN IMPROVEMENT IN ACADEMIC STUDY SKILLS[c]		.04*		.04		.04*		.01		.05*
GRADUATE'S ASSESSMENT OF SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM EMPLOYER[c]		.28*		.26		.31*		.39*		.24*

[a] "Negotiability" measured by Job Change Index Score (created from Q. 32) for each respondent employed while in the external degree program. Negotiability score ranged from a low of zero (no type of job change, or negotiability) to a high of five (considerable amount of job change).

[b] Includes security and protective services; food services; non-professional health services.

[c] Continuous variables; questions were eligible to be answered by all respondents.

[d] Significance not ascertainable for these categories.

[e] Approached significance at $p < .05$

* $p < .05$

personal attitudes and situational factors all emerged as influencing changes in work-life (Table 12). Associate-level recipients fared in general less well than did the "average" graduate, as did graduates who were over 50 at the time they completed their degree and those who had been working in a nonprofit service-oriented organization. For graduates who had been employed in clerical, sales, or lower management positions the likelihood of improvement was above average.

Certain attitudes held by the graduates themselves were related to their negotiability experiences. For example, those who had considered job advancement or recognition to be important and who were concerned about improving their job skills via the external degree were more likely to find improvement in their job situation as a result of their efforts.

Finally, graduates who had reported receiving employer support for their degree efforts did in fact reportedly experience more negotiability.

There were indications that some of the remaining demographic variables might also be related to how much overall negotiability was experienced by graduates; however, the relationships were not statistically significant. For example, it appeared that the optimal decade to have obtained the external degree was the thirties, after which period negotiability declined. It also seemed that graduates who had earned their degree in general or liberal studies were least likely of all graduates to experience improvements in their job situation, and that applied social sciences degree recipients were most likely to have benefitted in this respect. There also were indications that graduates working in private manufacturing firms were more likely to have experienced negotiability. Those who were in the armed forces seemed to be among those faring least well in this regard.

TABLE 13

NEGOTIABILITY: INDICATORS OF HIGH AND LOW PAY-OFF FOR MEN AND WOMEN

	Increase in Job Responsibility		Pay Increase or Promotion		Change Jobs	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Average Percent	44%	49%	41%	48%	31%	39%
LEVEL OF DEGREE						
Associate	-		-		-	
Bachelors						
AGE AT EDP COMPLETION						
Less than 30						
30 - 39	+	++				
40 - 44						
45 - 49						
50 or over	--				--	
AREA OF STUDY						
Business/Public Administration						
Applied Social Sciences						
General/Liberal Studies		--				
All other areas						
TYPE OF EMPLOYING ORGANIZATION						
Private Manufacturing						
Education			++			
Nonprofit Service	-				--	
Medical/Legal/Financial						
Armed Forces						
Self Employed				--		
Government						
Other Nonmanufacturing						
TYPE OF JOB						
Prof'l/Subprof'l/Technical						
Clerical, Slaes, Lower Management						
Services			++			
Armed Forces						
Other						
ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYER SUPPORT	+					

KEY:

"+" Indicates group average plus 5-10%.

"++" Indicates group average plus 11% or more.

"-" Indicates group average minus 5-10%.

"--" Indicates group average minus 11% or more.

(Only statistically significant changes ($p \leq .05$) are indicated.)

With respect to the most tangible pay-offs (more responsibility, more money, or a promotion, or a new and presumably better job) the summary of data shown in Table 13 shows clearly that persons who were relatively young (30-39) and especially women in this age group, were most likely to benefit; the same was also true of men in service occupations and/or working for educational institutions. Women who had majored in general or liberal arts studies and men over 50, benefitted considerably less than respondents in other categories.

Conclusion

From the data presented so far, as well as other data which are reported more fully in our detailed report, we have little difficulty concluding that this group of graduates were well served by the external degree. Most of them chose this study option because they sought a way of consolidating and supplementing earlier study experiences without sacrificing work and family responsibilities. Although career-related objectives were a central concern for the adult degree-seekers, of almost equal importance was the quest for personal satisfaction and stimulation, and for the achievement of further educational objectives.

To some extent, these findings came as a surprise. Before we undertook this study, we tended to believe that perhaps more than other students, adults who enrolled in external degree programs were predominantly motivated by "practical" considerations, for example, to obtain paper credentials for work they were already doing in order to satisfy the increasing educational requirements of bureaucratic institutions. In fact, their goals were more diverse. Although job-related benefits were certainly expected, the satisfaction of having the degree with its conferral of self-esteem and respect from others ranked very high among the benefits which especially the older students desired.

With respect to the degree's value as an educational credential, the "positive" study findings will not seem persuasive to those who peg their appraisal primarily on admission policies of selective colleges and graduate and professional schools. Considering the priorities of these adults--to study with minimal physical and social dislocation and to enhance their knowledge and qualifications in the fields and occupations in which they are already working--access to selective graduate departments or professional schools is probably seldom an objective.

In the world of work, the external degree yielded benefits. Women as a group profited especially, as well as those who were at the lower end of the occupational spectrum prior to degree completion. The unevenness of the negotiability experiences was not too surprising. Many graduates were well entrenched in their careers, and although definitive data on the relationship between education and employer hiring and promotion policies is lacking, our own employer survey did suggest that educational credentials may be primarily important in initial job access.

Our study findings point clearly to the usefulness of this degree and show that those who completed their program are well satisfied with their experience. Nevertheless, it would be unwise to jump to the conclusion that external degrees are an educational panacea. For one thing, our study dealt only with graduates. We know little about the experiences of adults who enrolled in external degree programs and subsequently dropped out or transferred to other institutions for the completion of their degrees. Similarly, we collected no data about those who enrolled and continued their studies, but were not degree-seekers. Although we have no basis for making the a priori assumption that nongraduates would have had more or less favorable

experiences and outcomes than did graduates, questions concerning program persistence and within-level transfer opportunity remain to be addressed.

It is also important to point out that the degree-completers we studied are a fairly select group--men and women with considerable prior traditional education who were relatively affluent. The programs they completed were designed for older students, for whom residence requirements and class-room attendance present major obstacles, but who are quite capable of dealing with traditional academic requirements. Paradoxical as it may sound, we feel that the majority of these external degree programs and the graduates as well are really less "nontraditional" than other programs and graduates not carrying the external label. While the external degree option is an attractive one for well-prepared men and especially women who missed out on completing college earlier in life, it may well not be viable for adults who have serious educational deficits.

FOOTNOTES

[1]H. K. Zanville, "Implications for Nontraditional Education: Graduate and Professional School Receptivity to Nontraditional Student Applications" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, August, 1976).

[2]A considerable body of literature exists describing the positive relationship between "college quality" and lifetime earnings. For discussion and references, see Howard R. Bowen, Investment in Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977), pp. 254-260. As definitions of "college quality" are often based upon factors pertinent mostly to traditional programs or institutions--such as instructional cost per student, facilities, faculty qualifications, and so on--and employer policies and practices cannot be equated with "lifetime earnings," this body of research is difficult to interpret in relation to negotiability of external degrees.

[3]For discussion of the importance of student-advisor interaction during the learning process and also for additional references, see Bradley A. Hall, Jr., The Empire State College Mentor: An Emerging Role (available from the Office of Research and Development, Empire State College, 2 Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs, N.Y., September, 1975).

[4]Carol P. Sosdian and Laure M. Sharp, The External Degree as a Credential: Graduates' Experiences in Employment and Further Study (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, March, 1978).

[5]The most recent data on nationwide cohorts of college graduates, some of which are cited elsewhere in this paper, are a study of recent college graduates (class of '75), conducted for the National Center for Education Statistics by WESTAT, Inc., Rockville, Maryland (information also available from NCES, Office of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202), 1978; J. T. Royer and J. A. Creager, A Profile of 1968 College Freshmen in 1972 (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1976); and a follow-up study of the entering class of 1969 by Alexander Astin, Four Critical Years (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977).

[6]A total of 18 publications were used for this purpose. Most pertinent, because they were restricted to programs which emphasized minimal classroom study, were:

Wayne Blaze, Bill Hertzberg, Roy Krantz, and Al Lehrke, Guide to Alternative Colleges and Universities (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974).

Defense Activity for Nontraditional Education Support, Independent Study Catalog Guide to External Degree Programs: DOD 1322.8-C, vol. 1, sec. 5 (Pensacola, Florida: Department of Defense, June, 1976).

Education Development Center, List of Institutional Contacts for External Degree Possibilities in the U.S. (55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts, August, 1976).

Linda W. Gordon and Judy H. Schub, On-Campus/Off-Campus Degree Programs for Part-Time Students (Washington, D.C.: National University Extension Association, 1976).

Helpful information was also found in:
John Bear, A Comprehensive Guide to Alternative Degree Programs (Drawer H, Little River, California 95456: Rafton & Bear, 1976).
National Drug Abuse Career Development Center, Center for Human Services, Directory of External Degree and Other Nontraditional Programs (5530 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., January, 1976).
Alfred W. Munzert, National Directory of External Degree Programs (Machias, New York: Hemisphere Publications, 1976).

[7]The data obtained from these institutions form the basis for a Directory and for an analytic report describing the characteristics of institutions and programs: Carol P. Sosdian and Laure M. Sharp, Guide to Undergraduate External Degree Programs in the United States (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, March, 1978); Carol P. Sosdian External Degrees: Program and Student Characteristics (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, March, 1978).

[8]It should be noted that data on graduates' goals or reasons for obtaining the degree were obtained in retrospect, and hence are subject to the biases associated with this method.

[9]John Eggert, "An Examination of Goals of Potential and Actual Learners: University of Mid-America/State University of Nebraska" (Lincoln, Nebraska: Office of Research and Evaluation), Working Paper No. 1, pp. 42-49.

[10]Op. cit., WESTAT (NCES), 1978.

[11]Op. cit., Royer and Creager, 1976.

[12]Op. cit., Astin, 1977.

[13]"The Regents' External Degree Program: Graduate School Survey Report." Copies available from Office of the Director, New York Regents' External Degree Program, Room 1913, 99 Washington Avenue, Albany, N.Y., 12230.

[14]Source of information regarding selectivity and the ratings of individual institutions was Alexander Astin, Predicting Academic Performance in College (Free Press, 1971).

[15]Of the 20 institutions whose graduates participated in this study, 17 had regional accreditation as of September 1976. Since that time, however, two of the remaining three have obtained formal regional accreditation.